



## Comments

More evidence is accumulating to show that the average cost of producing feeder calves and yearlings is increasing this year. New government projections put the cost to about \$89.19 per cwt. for 1981. That's about as close to a \$100 bill as those government calculators could make it for the year. The \$89.19 figure compares to an average cost of \$85.27 per cwt. to produce feeder calves last year.

Even with the higher production costs, gross returns to the cow-calf producer are expected to also be up this year—perhaps as much as 17% to \$108.85.

As you may recall, the government used optimistic projections for fed cattle prices during 1981 to project substantial feedlot returns. One government feedlot economist told Western Livestock Journal this week they still project that the average cattle feeder will be ahead by 45 cents for each 100 lbs. of beef sold in 1981.

Cattle feeders and stockmen who have sold cattle at depressed prices since those optimistic government projections for fed prices are far less sure of the 1981 outlook. Moreover, many of these feeders and stockmen still believe the average days on feed must be cut substantially if the feedlot business is to return to long-range profitability.

Meantime, cow-calf producers apparently will do slightly better than last year and better than many government economists were predicting. Net returns on the ranch are now projected to increase to \$9.66 per cwt. That's a 22% increase from 1980. After paying direct costs, ranchers can expect an 11% increase in returns to about \$40.53 this year, up from \$36.41 in 1980. This, remember, is an average for all types of cow-calf operations. Shortrun cost of producing feeder cattle is about double for operations with fewer than 100 brood cows as it is on ranches with 1000 cows.

Those figures seem to suggest the government's calculation that feedlot gains are still more profitable than range feeding may not hold up to public scrutiny.

Whether the government figures on feedlot and range feeding are raw or cooked, stockmen are entitled to see what the Feds see and to make up their own minds about how well the government economists are doing. Both stockmen and feedlot operators must recognize, however, that in 1981 the government's figures are not the final word on the cattle industry's creaky financial structure.

GLEN RICHARDSON



**NEUTRAL TO FRIENDLY**—Cash cattle prices should continue to be strong for the next 30 to 60 days said an analyst with the Victoria Co., after the USDA released its 23-state cattle-on-feed report. The report, considered neutral to friendly by analysts, said there were 9.76 million head of cattle and calves on feed in the 23 states, the lowest April 1 figure since 1975.

## FDA hearings wrapping up; judge delays DES decision

Most of the preliminary hearings have been held on the use of diethylstilbestrol (DES) after it was banned, while the decision in a Wichita-based trial on DES-implemented meat has been delayed until May 8. Food and Drug Administration and court officials said.

Reports CNS, a decision on the fate of 273 beef carcasses made from cattle implanted with DES after the ban, is expected by District Judge Patrick Kelly May 8, a court spokesman said. No action has been taken in a similar case in Amarillo, Texas, a court clerk said.

Meanwhile, the preliminary hearings are being held to allow firms accused of using DES after an Oct. 31, 1979, ban, an opportunity to state why the FDA should not seek prosecution.

Only one hearing, involving several firms, remains to be held in the Kansas City region, Joe McDonald, an FDA spokesman, said. This hearing will be delayed until a possible conflict of interest concerning the

lawyers involved is resolved, McDonald said.

All of the hearings have been held or firms have responded to the FDA in the Dallas region, according to Robert Hatfield, FDA compliance officer for the region.

FDA's lawyers have refused to release information on the status of any of the DES cases because of the possibility of compromising the cases, Bill Rados, FDA press spokesman, said.

### Lightest snowpack on record:

## Western water outlook dim; shortage expected

One of the lightest snowpacks ever recorded in the U.S. western mountain watersheds probably will cause short water supplies in some western states this summer, according to a forecast released by the USDA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, reports CNS.

In Arizona and California, runoff is expected to be below normal, but reservoir storage is adequate for most

needs, USDA said. Snowpack in the Pacific Northwest also is very low. In Oregon, snowpack in the Cascade Mountain Range is the lowest on record, and runoff will be well below normal, USDA said. However, in Washington, reservoir storage is adequate to supplement poor runoff. Snowpack in Wyoming, Montana, Utah and Idaho also is lower than normal, and water supplies will depend on reservoir access.

### USDA releases feed grain figures

There were 920 million bushels of feed grains and wheat in the three farmer-held grain reserves as of April 16, the USDA said recently.

That total included 549 million bushels of corn, 358.5 million bushels of wheat and 12.6 million bushels of barley.

There were 241 million bushels of corn redeemed since April 16, 173,000 bushels of barley and 728,000 bushels of wheat, USDA said.

In an increasing number of cases, pseudorabies outbreaks in swine are spreading to cattle on farms because swine that die from the disease are improperly disposed of, USDA officials said recently.

Reports CNS, James Downard, senior staff veter-

# WESTERN LIVESTOCK JOURNAL

A GROW PUBLICATION

News • Trends • Sales • Shows • Markets

April 27, 1981

Central Edition

Vol 60, No. 26

### Lowest number since '75

## Cattle on feed figures down

There were 9.76 million head of cattle and calves on feed as of April 1, four percent less than a year earlier, the USDA said in its recent 23-state cattle-on-feed report.

USDA said the April 1 C-O-F figure for the 23 states was the lowest April 1 figure since 1975, reports CNS.

During the January through March quarter, 5.15 million cattle and calves were placed on feed, one percent fewer than in the first quarter of 1980 and 12% fewer than during first quarter 1979, USDA said. Fed cattle marketings during the first quarter of 1981 totaled six million head, down two percent from the same quarter 1980 and

down 11% from first quarter 1979.

USDA said the April 1 C-O-F inventory included 6.58 million steers and steer calves, down three percent from a year earlier and 3.13 million heifers and heifer calves, down six percent from April 1, 1980. The cattle on feed on April 1 were 67% steers and steer calves, unchanged from the April 1, 1980 percentage.

USDA said cattle feeders expect to market about 5.54 million head of cattle during the April through June quarter this year. That would be two percent less than the number marketed during the second quarter of 1980, USDA said.

In the seven states that report cattle-on-feed figures monthly, the total number on feed as of April 1 was 6.84 million head, four percent fewer than a year earlier and 14% less than in April 1979.

Placements in the seven states during March were 1.37 million head, up four

percent from a year earlier but 14% below March 1979 placements. Fed cattle marketings in the seven states during March were 1.54 million head, four percent more than in March 1980 but nine percent less than in March 1979, USDA said. USDA said first quarter 1981 marketings in the seven states were 4.60 million head, five percent less than in first quarter 1980.

Marketings was the most positive figure in the 23-state cattle-on-feed report, which was considered neutral to friendly overall, according to analysts conducted by CNS.

The marketing figure, at 98% of a year ago, was slightly above most analysts' expectations, which averaged 96.7%. This indicated that although fewer cattle than a year ago were marketed in January and February, a larger number of cattle were sold during March and the industry has

(Continued on page 2)

## Plans underway for partial embargo lift

**BULLETIN:** As we go to press, President Reagan is expected to announce a partial lifting of the grain embargo against the USSR. Watch for a complete summary and analysis in next week's WLJ.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan has tentatively decided on a partial lifting of the grains embargo against the Soviet Union as a result of the easing of tensions in Poland, CBS news reported recently.

CBS correspondent Leslie Stahl reported White House officials are planning "a phased lifting with built-in incentives designed to encourage the Soviets to behave themselves over Poland."

According to UCN, CBS reported the Soviets will be allowed at first to purchase additional wheat and soybeans. But more corn purchases will not be permitted because drought-ridden corn farmers are "not confident they will have a normal crop."

The network said government lawyers are now working on developing new export licenses to accommodate the limited grain sales to the USSR.

The Soviet Union will not immediately enter the U.S. grains market when the partial grains embargo is lifted, U.S. exporters said. The embargo has placed the U.S. firmly in the role of residual supplier to the USSR and the lifting of it will not restore the U.S. to its former role as the USSR's main grain sup-

plier, they said. The Soviet Union will likely wait until a new long-term grains agreement is in place before any commitments for U.S. grains are made, exporters said. The current agreement expires Sept. 30.

Although exporters do not expect an immediate surge in U.S.-USSR trade, a rapid increase of sales to the

(Continued on page 2)

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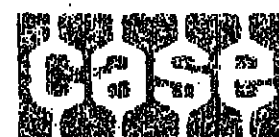
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# Survey shows farmers' lung affects more than black lung

A recent health survey indicates that agricultural workers have a higher incidence of respiratory illness than any other occupation including coal miners, according to Del Sanford of the Institute of Rural Environmental Health at Colorado State University.

"Nearly one-third of agricultural workers have respiratory problems," said Sanford. However, Pote Knapp, an agricultural engineer at the University of Iowa Institute of Agricultural Medicine, estimates that more than half of all agriculture workers may be affected.

The causes vary, according to Sanford; gases and vapor from chemicals and manure damage the lungs and can create permanent damage which impairs breathing. A condition

known as farmers' lung is attributed to exposure to grain dust and/or moldy feed products, containing the lungs with particles of grain, silica, mold, and other aerosols.

One of the problems is that many farmers don't know exactly what is bothering them.

Elmer Johannsen, a retired farmer from northwest Iowa, thinks his chronic asthmatic condition may be genetic, since his father and brother, both farmers, suffer from the same symptoms. Johannsen's second son, who took over the family farm, is now beginning to have breathing problems. Johannsen now spends his winters in Arizona where he can breathe more easily. His brother is in a hospital in Phoenix recovering from an acute asthma attack.

Johannsen's wife explained that her husband first started having difficulty breathing while working around the hogs, and that on dusty days, even the hogs would start coughing and some would get pneumonia. "First, we got rid of the hogs," she said. "Then the cattle, then Elmer got an air conditioned cab for his tractor so that he wouldn't be breathing the dust in the fields, and he rarely went into the grain storage bin."

Johannsen now has difficulty being around Kent, his oldest son who manages a hog confinement operation where hundreds of swine are raised under one roof. Workers in such areas are known to be especially prone to respiratory problems. Kent is not; but Johannsen cannot breathe in his son's house nor can he

be around his son when Kent is wearing work clothes. "His lungs begin to clog," says Johannsen's wife, "his bronchial tubes close and his heart pounds."

Dr. Kelley Donham of the University of Iowa College of Agricultural Medicine, recently surveyed 2,000 workers in hog confinement areas, and found that 73% of them had respiratory problems.

Respirators do not always stop the symptoms in the hog barns, according to Donham. But they are known to help in grain storage areas where there are no government regulations requiring ventilation.

The high rate of worker discomfort in the hog barns may draw attention to the larger problem of mold and dust in the lungs of agricultural workers,

according to Knapp. Margo Itosenkranz of the Workplace Health in Agriculture Program, stated, "Farmers' respiratory problems are often diagnosed as bronchitis. The doctor needs to know about grain dust and other respiratory hazards or the farmer's condition can just keep getting worse, possibly ending with emphysema."

Dr. Irving Cast, at the Nebraska Institute of Medicine is puzzled by the alleged lack of information about farmers' lung. "We've known about the condition for 400-500 years," said Cast. "Most grains can cause it, even peanut dust."

Rollins Schnieder, agricultural health and safety expert for the University of Nebraska, insists that there

is a problem. "You'd be surprised at the lack of information in this area," says Schnieder. "It is hard to pinpoint it as farmers' lung. There are very few doctors in our area who specialize in respiratory problems."

"I've seen (x-rays) of farmer's lungs," said Schnieder. "The lungs are often coated and some even have mold spores growing in the lesions of the scar tissue." Schnieder is a former advisor to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and has been working with the National and Nebraska Lung Associations to alert farmers and doctors to the possibility that the high incidence of lung problems among farmers could be attributable to infection or allergy reactions caused by grain dust contaminants.

# New Zealand sheep official promotes promotion benefit

The success of New Zealand's lamb-exporting efforts is largely the result of extensive promotion, Graeme Lindsay, of the New Zealand Lamb Co., Inc., said recently in Wichita, Kan., reports CNS.

New Zealand spends about three cents a pound on advertising and promoting its lamb sold in the U.S. Lindsay told a National Lamb Marketing Symposium. New Zealand is the world's fourth-largest lamb producer but is the number one exporter.

The New Zealand advertising and promotion budget compares with 0.03 cent per lb. spent by the U.S. sheep industry, participants at the symposium said. The participants agreed U.S. lamb producers have been struggling with below-cost-of-production prices in recent months.

In New Zealand, the lamb business remains profitable, Lindsay said.

U.S. lamb prices are not depressed because of New Zealand exports, Lindsay said, because New Zealand sales efforts are not directed against U.S. lamb but toward increased total lamb sales. He said there was still some unsatisfied consumer demand for lamb.

In most U.S. supermarkets, New Zealand lamb is priced lower than U.S. lamb, the participants said.

Lindsay urged U.S. producers to increase promotion efforts, although he was doubtful that total per capita lamb consumption, which was less than two pounds per person last year, could be increased significantly. Red meat consumption is flat, he said, and

lamb prices will continue to follow other meat prices.

Lindsay said that New Zealand has been turning down some lamb export demand from the Middle East in order to maintain exports to other established markets, such as the U.S.

The New Zealand Lamb Co., Inc. and its Canadian counterpart, the New Zealand Lamb Co. Ltd., are the sole importers and sellers of New Zealand lamb in the U.S. and Canada, Lindsay said. About 10% of the lamb consumed in the U.S. is imported, mostly from New Zealand.

A major difference between the U.S. and New Zealand lamb sold here is that the imported lamb is frozen and boxed, Lindsay said. While more and more U.S. lamb is boxed, as with beef.



**ADVISOR** — Dennis R. White, Ph.D., has recently been transferred within Elanco Products Co., the agricultural marketing division of Eli Lilly and Co. White has been named to the newly created position of technical services advisor for cattle products. He joined Elanco in December of 1979 as a marketing associate for cattle products.

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